

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 455

By Johnson

A RESOLUTION to honor and congratulate the Independence High School football team on winning the 2015 TSSAA Division I Class 5A State Football Championship.

WHEREAS, the General Assembly is pleased to specially honor and commend those successful high school teams that, through their magnificent exploits, bring honor to Tennessee and serve as exceptional ambassadors for this State; and

WHEREAS, the Eagles of Independence High School achieved an extraordinary level of success during the 2015 season, winning their first Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association (TSSAA) Division I Class 5A State Football Championship, the State's highest level of high school football competition; and

WHEREAS, state championships are achieved only through hard work, dedication, and the ability to work together as a team and excel with a cooperative spirit; the mighty Eagles exhibited each of these rare qualities during their championship season; and

WHEREAS, amassing a perfect 15–0 season record, the Eagles readily bested all contenders they faced during an incredible playoff season, culminating in an impressive win over Sevier County High School (49–14) in the BlueCross Bowl on December 4, 2015, in Cookeville; and

WHEREAS, the members of this championship team include Chris Beavers, Ryan Becker, Andrew Bunch, Garrett Davis, Pete Dorsten, Josh Ellis, Alex Guinest, Brandon Hastings, Keegan Hudson, Seth Huner, Nate Johnson, Guillermo Morales, Thomas Newburg, Jesse Newcome, Brandon Parkinson, Jordan Pope, Brandon Sligh, Jacob Stoney, Kylan Stribling, Adam Swayze, Pierre Watkins, Daniel Wright, Gavin Bailey, Jake Brickell, Austin Copps, Corbin Daugherty, Isaiah Demello, David Demke, Hunter Dupree, Ian Grau, Landon

Guidry, Timothy Hambly, Brandon Hines, Cole Huner, Jacob McReynolds, Owen Murphy, Waleed Nofal, Grayson Pantall, Michael Pierce, Brett Saunders, Avery Sears, Ryan Smith, Montray Steele, Alan Watson, Michael Weathers, Connor Weed, Harold Arana, Ames Arrington, Matt Atkinson, Zach Bender, Blake Bixby, Brandon Brotemarkle, Kaleb Cone, Preston Crawford, Morgan Cyrus, Tommy Gomez, Kyle Greenwell, Tavion Hamilton, C.J. Hills, Brooks Howard, Xavier Johnson, Zion Katina, Colin Lacapra, Mekhi Love, Ben Militello, Beau Myers, Jacob Newcome, Conner Pratt, Aaron Reynolds, Jace Roberts, Javon Robertson, Colby Shaffer, Sean Smith, Frank Thomas, Jackson Twaddle, Van Willett, Andrew Cannon, Nathan Cisco, Jacob Downing, Trooper Hagan, Jake Huner, Tyrus Jackson, Colby Logan, Kendrell Scurry, T.J. Sheffield, and Joey Torino; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of his talents on the field, senior wide receiver Nate Johnson was selected as the 2015 Class 5A "Mr. Football" runner-up after executing eighty-seven receptions for a staggering 1,713 yards and twenty-seven touchdowns, including a rushing and punt return touchdown; and

WHEREAS, the Eagles were led by the golden arm of Andrew Bunch, who averaged 357 yards and threw forty-one touchdowns despite missing four games due to injury, and his group of sure-handed receivers, Seth Huner, Adam Swayze, Pierre Watkins, Montray Steele, and Daniel Wright, who were dauntless in attacking defenses; and

WHEREAS, the multi-talented Adam Swayze navigated the team to four victories as quarterback, immediately completing a season-long eighty-eight yard touchdown and rushing for an impressive 277 yards; and

WHEREAS, running back Daniel Wright rushed for 1,256 yards and sixteen of his total twenty-three touchdowns behind a fearless offensive line that included Michael Weathers, Isaiah Demillo, Keegan Hudson, Pete Dorsten, Austin Copps, and Garrett Davis; and

WHEREAS, the stout defense that held opponents to an average of 11.4 points per game included leading tacklers Hunter Dupree (118), Jacob Stoney (95), Chris Beavers (83), Landon Guidry (80), David Demke (75), Jessie Newcome (75), Michael Pierce (72), Kylan Stribling (67), Cole Huner (51), and Jordan Pope (51); and

WHEREAS, this exceptional team was led by Head Coach Scott Blade, who captured a second career Tennessee state football championship and crafted a high-powered offense that averaged 42.7 points and 467.1 yards per game and scored 88 touchdowns; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the superb leadership of Head Coach Blade, the Eagles enjoyed the outstanding coaching and assistance of a tremendous staff, namely Defensive Coordinator Lance White and assistant coaches, Kelly Myers, Greg Burns, Jeremiah Justice, Jeremy Byrd, Keith Hudson, Brian Pence, Matt Powell, Chad Gates, Kyle Castles, Roy Mangrum, Scott Brickell, and Tom Murray; and

WHEREAS, those who shared their talents for the betterment of the Independence High School team include: Dr. Todd Wurth, Team Physician; Brandi Mangrum, Head Trainer; Alex Fleming and Darrian Harlan, Middle Tennessee State University interns; and Independence High School student trainers: Morgan Martin, Rachel Stricklin, Mackenzie Hollister, Ashley Molina, Taylor Lipert, Tori Lay, Sierra Falcone, Yiota Katsaitis, Daisy Carrascoza, Tanner Smalling, and Emily Cole; and

WHEREAS, the dedication, determination, work ethic, and talent of these exceptional athletes not only made possible a championship season, but also surely bode well for their success in every future endeavor; and

WHEREAS, the football players of Independence High School epitomize all that is good in today's student-athlete, as they have achieved the highest level of success on the field while showing the highest degree of character both on and off the field; they inspired the school's student body and united the entire community during their triumphant run through the 2015 season; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and congratulate the players, coaching staff, and fans of the Independence High School Eagles football team on a remarkable season and their State Championship victory. On becoming TSSAA Division I Class 5A State Football Champions, the Eagles have proven themselves to be exemplary and capable young men who are worthy of this General Assembly's accolades.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.